

# CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

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## Testimony in Support of Proposed S.B. 501 An Act Concerning the Municipal Regulation of Snowmobiles and All-Terrain Vehicles To the Transportation Committee Submitted by: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director February 9, 2015

Co-Chairs Maynard, Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee –

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of Proposed S.B. 501: **An Act Concerning the Municipal Regulation of Snowmobiles and All-Terrain Vehicles**. Thank you for raising this bill which provides municipalities with the option to strengthen their ability to regulate the use and operation of dirt bikes, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles (collectively referred to herein as "ATVs").

CLCC serves as the umbrella organization for the state's land conservation community, working with land trusts (now numbering 137+), other conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and individuals to increase the pace, quality, scale and permanency of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state.

C.G.S. 23-8(b) sets forth the goal of preserving 21% of state land, with 11% of the goal required to come from conservation of land by "others" (towns, land trusts and water companies). To this end, towns, land trusts, utilities and the state (collectively "conservation partners") have invested considerable funding and volunteer hours into the acquisition and protection of land for conservation, recreation and agricultural purposes. Protecting this investment in land protection through active management and stewardship is an on-going challenge for all conservation partners.

Use of ATVs on public and private conservation lands is commonplace, and is almost always illegal. The problem is pervasive, with illegal ATV use not only interfering with the public's use and enjoyment of their public and private trails and lands, but also creating extensive damage, including: (i) destruction of vegetation and sensitive wetland habitats; (ii) increased erosion on and off trail areas; (iii) siltation into lakes and streams; and (iv) damage to fish spawning areas and other wildlife habitats.

Proposed S.B. 501 enables, but does not require, towns to enact an ordinance, or strengthen an existing ordinance, regulating the operation and use of ATVs, with a provision for seizure and forfeiture for use against repeat offenders. The bill does not increase the existing penalties for operating ATVs illegally nor does it mandate any particular enforcement action or program. Finally, this proposal requires no fiscal note.

For the foregoing reasons, the Connecticut Land Conservation Council respectfully urges the Transportation Committee to support Proposed S.B. 501 which provides towns with an option to strengthen its local ATV regulations.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

